

February 5, 2003

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
1205 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Fattah:

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC) is the principal ecumenical organization in the United States through which 36 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican member communions (denominations) with a combined membership of more than 50 million Christians in nearly 140,000 congregations nationwide join in a common witness through ministries of faith, justice, education and public witness. The NCC is pleased to support *The Students Bill of Rights*, H.R. 236.

We believe that quality education is essential to the success of every child in the 21st century. In recent years, the supportive voices of our churches have been missing from the debate about our nation's schools. As a result, public consciousness has been dominated by those who have a negative view of public education. The NCC is committed to strengthening and reforming the public schools because we believe the public school is one of the cornerstones of our democratic society. The public schools are the primary route out of poverty for most children.

There are wide disparities among public schools, in part because schools reflect the affluence and/ or the political power of the communities in which they are found. *The Students Bill of Rights* will ensure educational opportunities to all K-12 students regardless of race, ethnicity and geographical location, whether urban suburban or rural. The bill would entitle every K-12 student to qualified teachers, trained guidance counselor, smaller classes, up to date textbooks and libraries and computer and Internet access.

The National Council of Churches of Christ looks forward to working with you to advance this important legislation

Brenda Girton-Mitchell, JD
Associate General Secretary for Public Policy
and Director of Washington Office